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## Designing a web page to facilitate communication

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## Designing a web page to facilitate communication

### Abstract

The purpose of this action research project was to build a teacher-controlled web page that would facilitate communication between home, community, and school. The web site contained information about administration, athletics (including schedules), honor roll and awards, faculty and staff information, advisor/advisee programs, academic information with assignments, special events, and students of the week.

Twenty-three seventh grade parents volunteered to respond to surveys about their communication with the staff at the Nashua-Plainfield Middle School and the implementation of the middle school web site.

The response by the parents indicated that they liked the monthly news, information on assignments, and athletic schedules the most. Project requirements, calendar, and teacher information were also considered valuable. Parents requested that all assignments be put on to the web site and post more students' pictures. Students surveyed stated that they had visited and liked the athletic links, as well as the assignment pages and calendar. They were also interested in seeing their pictures on the web page and asked when it was going to be updated with new pictures.

# Designing A Web Page to Facilitate Communication

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Division of Middle Level Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts in Education

By

Lori B. Lee

May, 2002

This Project by: Lori B. Lee

Titled: Designing A Web Page to Facilitate Communication

has been approved as meeting the research requirements for the

Degree of Masters of Arts in Education.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this action research project was to build a teacher-controlled web page that would facilitate communication between home, community, and school. The web site contained information about administration, athletics (including schedules), honor roll and awards, faculty and staff information, advisor/advisee programs, academic information with assignments, special events, and students of the week. Teachers update the information using the Claris Home Page (19996-1997) program on a daily or weekly basis allowing viewers to stay informed on the happenings in the school. Viewers can e-mail the school personnel to ask questions and get information.

Twenty-three seventh grade parents volunteered to respond to surveys about their communication with the staff at the Nashua-Plainfield Middle School and the implementation of the middle school web site. The middle school children of these parents gave their input on the content of this site. A teacher-controlled web site was set up and placed into practice. Parents, students and community were invited to visit the links to get information on assignments, units, project requirements, contacting teachers through e-mail, calendar information, and special events. A limitation of this method of communication is not all households have access to the Internet in their homes, although many have it elsewhere. Over the course of four months, parents and students were asked to evaluate the web site.

The response by the parents of the study indicated that they liked the monthly news, information on assignments, and athletic schedules the most. Project requirements, calendar, and teacher information were also considered valuable. Parents requested that all assignments be put on to the web site and post more students pictures. Students surveyed stated that they had visited and liked the athletic links, as well as the assignment pages and calendar. They were also interested in seeing their pictures on the web page and asked when it was going to be updated with new pictures.

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To Whom it may Concern: This is to inform you that due to the colored content of some pages, those sheets needed to be printed on different paper as those written on black and white pages.

Lori Lee

Middle School Masters Program



## **Designing A Web Page to Facilitate Communication**

### **Chapter 1**

Communication between school and home provides a vital link for a child's academic success (Weyhmuller, 1999). In our changing world, parents are faced with more demands on their time than ever before (Haug & Wright, 1991). Everyone seems to work harder and have less time. This can make parents feel very isolated. Add the responsibility of raising children and this makes for a major challenge (Kaplan, 1999). Although parents may have less time, most parents view communication with the school and teachers as critical to being involved in their child's education. They want and need the information about their school's structure, rules, organizations, course requirements and homework policies (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999).

Because of these reasons, the development of a school web page gives another option to parents, schools, and community to communicate with each other. The purpose of a school web page is to allow viewers to see what is going on in the schools, check assignments, calendars, schedules, project requirements as well as special events for students. Teachers post this information on a teacher-controlled site on a regular basis so the information is current. Surveys sent out before the implementation of a teacher-controlled web page help to gain input from parents and students as to links that they think will be important and beneficial (T.H.E. Journal, 2000).

The computer technology we have today is so powerful that it is changing how we work, play and learn (Kaplan, 1999). By utilizing this new technology, our educational system may be able to increase and make it easier to gain parental involvement and community interaction. Because computers are here to stay (Weyhemuller, 1999), the development of a school web page can have long term benefits.

Schools are less successful without community connections and support (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation [CSMF], 1993). With the addition of a web page, these

connections are made more readily available. People can read about the things going on in their school and can be a part of it, if they choose to do so.

Teachers receive many benefits from having a web page and distant learning options (Geisert & Futrell, 2000). Not only do students and parents have access to information, they can contact a teacher by e-mail about assignments at any time of the day, making it more convenient for all involved. Another advantage reported is the decrease of late assignments. Students get triple teamed with teachers, parents and their own organizational skills. If someone has been sick or gone on vacation, he-she can find out what has happened in class (Wormeli, 2000).

### **Definitions**

In order for readers to have a common understanding of this topic, the following definitions are provided:

#### **1. The Internet or World Wide Web (WWW):**

enables people to communicate instantly across national and international borders through electronic mail (e-mail) (Healey, 1998).

#### **2. Web page :**

an electronic source of information found on the Internet that can be used for personal, educational, and commercial use. Data on a web page can be up-dated so the viewer has current and accurate information. Another name for this is web site.

#### **3. URL:**

each web site has what is called a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). The URL is a specific pattern combining letters, numbers, and punctuation, that is like a phone number for that site (Geisert & Futrell, 2000).

#### **4. Teacher-created web page:**

school/teacher created and maintained information pages that allow current information to be posted for home and community members to view by using a Internet Web Browser.

### 5. Links:

refers to the connections from one point on a web site to another with the same website or moving to another website. This allows the viewer to move from page to page in a quicker, easier manner.

Failure to communicate remains a major complaint of both parents and teachers. (Weyhmuller, 1999). The intent of this project was that with the development of a teacher-controlled web page, two-way communication would increase. Much research shows that when parents are involved with their child's education, major positive benefits occur (Harrington & Young, 1993).

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

In my teaching at a rural middle school, I have found that sometimes communication becomes a problem. With students coming to the seventh grade from elementary schools located in different towns, there have been concerns. Some of these deal with scheduling, disseminating the calendar of events, and sharing assignments if a student has missed school. Sometimes students do not always get things home that they should and other times parents want more information about grades and project requirements. Communication is an important aspect of education. If parents and the community do not know what is going on at their school, they may not realize the positive academic and co-curricular activities involving their students. The significance of parent involvement, the importance of community involvement, and the advantages of web sites for the educators will be addressed in this chapter.

#### **Significance of Parent Involvement**

“Parents are the first teachers children have, the most consistent teachers they have, and the most influential teachers they have” (Crow, 2001). This statement was made by Sandy Parker, a fifth grade teacher in Oakton, Virginia. If this is true, it is essential for parents to support their children’s learning. According to Parker, if parents are keeping track of what their kids are doing at school, they can identify problems early on and communicate with teachers so these problems are not overlooked (Crow, 2001).

The involvement of parents in a child’s education leads to increase academic achievement, higher self-esteem, fewer behavior problems, and improved attendance at school (Harrington & Young, 1993). Other studies have shown that parent involvement also leads to a decrease in drop-out rates, a greater commitment to school work and improved attitudes to school (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 2001).

The National Middle School Association has identified six characteristics or conditions that should be in place in middle schools in order for them to make the most

appropriate program decisions. One of those characteristics deals with family and community partnerships. As stated in "This We Believe" ( NMSA, 1995), families and community members are important stakeholders in a developmentally responsive middle level school. Some parents become less involved when their children reach the middle level, while other families have little involvement in their children's education from the beginning (NMSA, 1995). Since school achievement is directly related to the degree of family support and involvement, two-way communication becomes especially critical (NMSA, 1995).

The National Parent Teacher Association [NPTA] has developed a set of National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs (2001) because of the vital role that parent involvement plays. The main premise of these standards is that parent and family involvement increases student achievement and success. The first standard addresses communication between home and school: Communication between home and school needs to be regular, two-way, and meaningful. Communication is the foundation of a solid relationship (NPTA, 2001).

A research project published by Rutherford and Billig (1995) focused on family and community involvement in nine local sites. With their findings, they developed a set of eight lessons about the critical and complex nature of school-family partnerships and the middle school. One of those lessons stated that one-on-one communication between families and teachers help build support for middle-grade students (Rutheford, & Billig, 1995).

The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll annually gathers information about a number of topics involving schools (Rose & Gallup, 1998). In the 1998 survey, subjects were asked about the different ways that schools communicate with home and the effectiveness of the communication. One of the categories was the Internet "chat rooms" set up by the local school. Eighty-eight percent of those polled rated this method to be somewhat to very effective in regards to communication (Rose & Gallup, 1998).

Wormeli (2000), a columnist for the NMSA Middle School Journal, suggested using online posting by teachers. Online posting is a process by which the person who is maintaining the web page can up-date the data as needed, thus allowing the viewer to have current and accurate information. Parents can view the school schedule, relevant school activities, class assignments or homework, and then download the information so they know what their children need to know and do. They can easily access the information 24-hours a day. If they have questions, they can send an e-mail to the teacher (T.H.E. Journal, 2000). One of the posting programs that is on the market is Claris Home Page (Claris Corporation, 1996-1997). The builder of the web page has the abilities to update information on a regular basis so that it is current and accurate.

### **Importance of Community Involvement**

The National Middle School Association states in their publication "This We Believe" (1995):

Family structure is being redefined. Nuclear and extended families once provided clear roles, expectations, and responsibilities. Today's nuclear families are less common, and more children than ever before are growing up without positive adult role models, particularly fathers. . . . The education of our youth, therefore, requires school and community programs that will cultivate responsible, moral decisions makers and enlightened citizens.

(p.9)

The education process is now being seen as a partnership not only between parents and teachers, but also including the community (Harris, 2001). Research shows that students perform better in school if not only are their parents involved, but if other caring community members are also involved (Harris, 2001).

Schools are a clear reflection of their communities (CSMF, 1993). With this idea in mind, many community members are becoming more supportive. Community members are advocating that education take place throughout the entire community (CSMF, 1993).

Community members and school partners can provide substantial assistance and expertise in the school-based instructional programs (NMSA, 1995).

Technology is playing a powerful role in opening schools up to their local communities. It is making it easier for business people and community members to get involved in education (Zehr, 2001). Teachers can post student work on web pages, thus allowing the public to be aware of the positive things going on and not just the “coffee shop” information (Zehr, 2001). Web sites also allow people to keep on top of what is occurring without having to be there; providing information such as the school calendar, lunch menu, and school program information (Zehr, 2001). The web site is like “putting a giant bulletin board outside your school, but a whole lot better. To get the news, people don’t have to drive by, they just click on” (Bergan, 1997, p. 39).

In the past, schools have been relatively isolated places. It does not need to be that way anymore. With the addition of new technology, there has been a resurgence of interest in schools from the community (Zehr, 2001).

### **Advantages of Web Sites for the Educator**

Not only does community and home communication benefit student success, but the improvement of connecting with the school allows students to get answers to questions when they are not at school. Thus allowing teachers to clarify issues without repeating themselves during limited classtime. In her book Healey (1998) stated that with the creation of a web site, schools have found there are not only positive benefits of increased parent and community involvement, but there are also benefits for the teacher. Dr. Healey shared the story of Bob Brown, a college physics professor. He noted that one advantage of e-mail is that he does not have to sit in one specific room to make himself available. Previously students would come to his office and then wait for him to get free (Healey, 1998). Now students can e-mail him or check his web site to get answers to their questions. Students do not waste time while waiting for answers, and teachers are able to help when they are not physically in the office.

The Internet is a two-way street; it can be used to receive information as well as send it out (Bergan, 1997). Teachers can send messages to students' parents, alumni, and school supporters and can therefore be a remarkable way to promote school activities and events (Bergan, 1997).

Depending on how a web site is set up and what service is used, teachers can post daily, weekly, and monthly homework assignments; tests and quizzes; project directions; student work; vocabulary lists; lecture notes; learning aides; and much more (Wormeli, 2000). Because information can be updated easily without any knowledge of computer programming languages (T.H.E. Journal, 2000), teachers can use this way of communication with little training and computer experience.

With a more mobile society and the changes in family structure, sometimes important information does not always get to all of the people who need or want it. It takes time for teachers to write and print information for students to take home to parents. Teachers never know if the information makes it into the hands of the parents, if it was left on the bus, or in the child's backpack (T.H.E. Journal, 2000). Having a duplicate method for reaching parents is essential.

Traditional notice communication takes a considerable amount of other resources as well as time. There is a large amount of money spent on paper, copier toner, and equipment repair for those notices to be sent home. With parents becoming more transient, the web page can become a one-stop location to find out information (T.H.E. Journal, 2000).

Another advantage that some teachers have seen is the decreasing amount of late homework (Wormeli, 2000). If a student forgets an assignment or directions for a project, they can see them posted on the web site. Many times parents get aggravated with the daily struggle to find out from their children what the teacher expects (Wormeli, 2000), so the website allows parents to monitor their child's assignments more closely.



## Chapter 3

### Methodology

Teaching in a district that is mainly rural and having students who come from different elementary schools, makes communication difficult at times. As a seventh grade teacher, on a middle school interdisciplinary team, I have been trying to find a way to help parents, students and others in the community have better access to the school and faculty. My team-members and I wanted to know if building a web page would improve communication.

During this project, I researched literature related to parent and school communication, the effect communication has on student success, and the development of a teacher controlled middle school web site. Using the University of Northern Iowa Rod Library, the Wartburg College library, public libraries, and the Internet, information was collected dealing with all of these topics.

In August of 2001, I started developing the teacher-controlled web site by examining the Nashua-Plainfield High School Web Page. This helped me gather the necessary parts from which I would begin designing our team's web page. I also attended a professional development class to learn how to construct web pages. The class was held at the Nashua-Plainfield Elementary School in Nashua and taught by the local technology director, Jeff Trost. Also covered in this class was the use of Claris Home Page and Adobe Deluxe to build a web page.

At the end of the first quarter of the 2001-2002 school year, parents of all seventh grade students were contacted by letter stating I was in the process of working on a research project evaluating the communication between school, home and community. Along with the informational letter sent to parents, a consent form was included to be filled out and returned. This gave permission for their child to be part of the survey as well as stating that parents would be a part of the survey pool. In developing a survey, I examined other surveys to see the format and types of questions asked. Once I had a

rough draft of the survey, I had my advisor, Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas review it. After further changes were made, the survey was then sent to The University of Northern Iowa to be reviewed by the Human Subjects Review Committee. I received notice that the survey was acceptable and I could proceed in December of 2001. A copy of this survey can be viewed in Appendix B for parents and Appendix C for students.

During the initial survey process, all seventh grade parents (N=51) were sent a letter explaining the project, asking for their input, and requesting to provide consent for their child to participate. Twenty-three parents completed and returned the survey allowing twenty-two students to participate. One student had two parents living in different towns giving consent. A copy of the consent form can be viewed in Appendix A. In the initial survey, parents and students were asked about the types of home and school communication that were currently being used. They were also asked what they would like to see on a middle school web page.

I examined the information requested to be included on the website by parents and students. Then I began putting together a user friendly format for not only parents and community members, but also the teachers who would be working with the website. After investigating the Nashua-Plainfield High School web site, I evaluated the different links that they had and compared them to our needs at the Nashua-Plainfield Middle School. It was decided to include the following information:

- \* A picture of the middle school including the address, phone number and principal's name.
- \* The district's mission statement.
- \* Links to academic, administration, athletics, calendar, Excel (our advisor/advisee program), faculty/staff information, honor roll/awards, special events and students (showcasing our Students of the Week).
- \* Nashua-Plainfield Search Engine
- \* Nashua-Plainfield Main District Page
- \* Nashua-Plainfield Live Weather Net

This format allowed teachers to highlight their own curriculum, post assignments, post athletic schedules, give project information, highlight student activities, as well as honor those students who made the honor roll and other awards. The calendar was added for viewers to check for dates for progress reports, concerts, early release days, and could be changed easily if the need arose. Parents who had students in different buildings could check the progress of their children with little trouble by using the main page link that could easily take them to another building's web page. The website also allowed parents and community members to e-mail faculty and staff by use of the faculty/staff page. The faculty/staff page contained biographical information about the faculty and staff and could be updated by individual staff members as needed.

### **Format**

In keeping with advice given to me by the technology instructor, I tried to keep the web pages narrow so as to not make the viewer scroll from side to side. I also used different colors on the link buttons and put them in boxed areas to distinguish the different links. Another piece of advice given to me was to take in consideration the amount of graphics that are used on an individual page. The use of graphics on a web page decreases the speed at which the different pages can be down-loaded, but it makes the pages more interesting to view. I worked with the Internet site, *Art Today* to get most of my graphics.

The individual pages were set up and are maintained by the teachers involved in those curriculum and athletic areas. After building the initial sites, I maintain the social studies, and science pages; especially the seventh grade links to those areas. This means I usually up-date the assignment pages for seventh grade science and seventh grade social studies classes on Friday afternoons for the up-coming week and the Family Living page as needed. I also maintain the cheerleading page as well as the seventh grade Student of the Week link. This means taking digital pictures of the students and using Adobe Photo Deluxe I revise them to fit on the web page in a form that the computer will recognize. Some examples of the web pages follow in the Appendix F.

After the web page was developed and implemented, a second survey was sent out in January, 2002 to those seventh grade parents and students who had agreed to participate. This survey gave the opportunity to comment on the site and give any further recommendations for its improvement. The survey for parents can be viewed in Appendix D and the survey for students in Appendix E. A third survey was sent out in February, 2002 to once again ask for recommendations. These surveys were the same as those sent for the second survey of opinions.

### **Summary**

Communication is an important aspect in education. In my review of literature, the interaction between the three areas of home, community and school became apparent. In my current teaching of a middle school in a rural area, the need for more opportunities to communicate was apparent. Because of these concerns, I attended a web page design class to learn how one process is use to implement a website. I polled parents and students as to their current methods of communication with home as well as the pieces of information that they felt would be important on a middle school web page. After considering the website that the Nashua-Plainfield High School has built, I decided on the areas that would be included in a middle school website. After the web page was in working order, I surveyed those same parents and students two more times for further suggestions and recommendations.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

The purpose of the building of a website for home, community, and students to visit was to give viewers another opportunity for communication with the middle school, its faculty, and staff. Research has shown that communication is an important link for a child's academic success (Weyhmuller, 1999). If there is a way in which to improve communication, thus improving student's success, I wanted our middle school to have such an avenue.

#### **First Set of Surveys**

During the process of building and maintaining the web page for the Nashua-Plainfield Middle School, there have been many students who have visited the site to find out information about projects, assignments, and athletic schedules as well as viewing pictures of themselves and peers. At the time of parent-teacher conferences held in January, when students were asked where they received information about assignments that they wrote in their planners, many students said they gained the information off of the web page instead of during classtime. Students surveyed stated that they liked having information about school related topics at their fingertips as well as seeing pictures of themselves. The ability of viewing athletic practice schedules and scores were also considered a positive aspect of the web page.

Parents liked the idea of having assignments posted and recommended that the entire school do this. They also enjoyed seeing pictures of different activities that students were involved in. Although most parents do not feel that they have a difficult time in contacting their child's teacher, and most contacted schools by notes and at conferences, this allowed them another option to view what is going on in their child's classroom, view any special honors, and school activities.

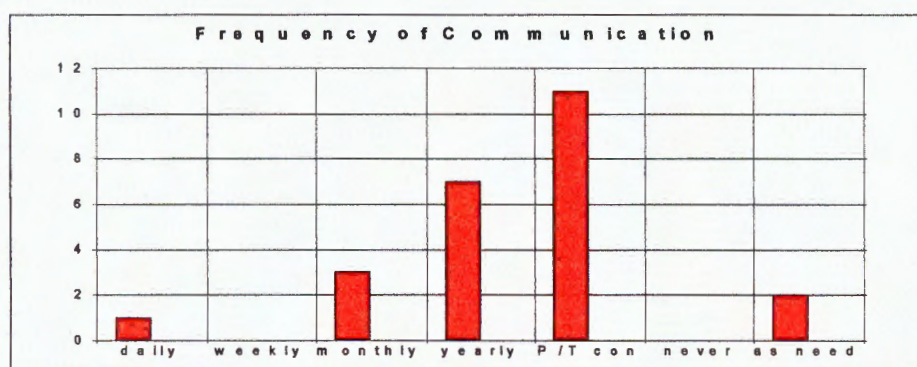
This also allowed community members to see what is going on in their schools, what the students are involved in, and receive accurate information. Community members

noted that they liked the idea of being able to view their grandchildren's and neighborhood children's activities and honors.

### Overview of Data Collected

The following figures share information gathered from the first set of surveys that were returned by parents and students. Also included in this chapter are figures that identify further recommendations and comments from parents, students, and community members.

**Figure 1. Frequency of Communication with Teachers by Parents**

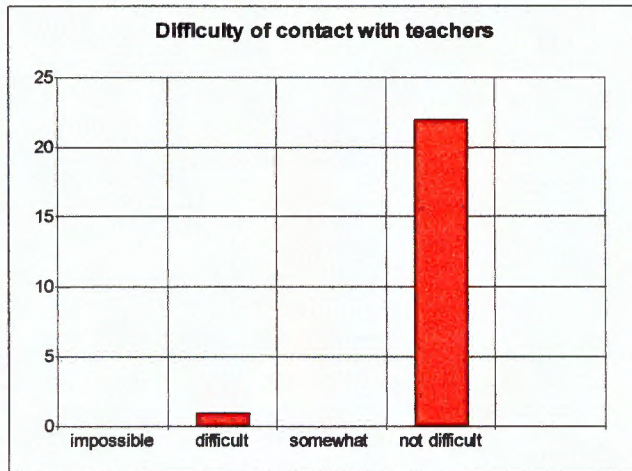


Parents were asked, "How often do you communicate with your child's teacher?"

Out of 23 parent responses, 1 parent communicates with his/her child's teacher on a daily basis, 3 stated it was a couple of times a month, 7 said yearly, 11 only at parent-teacher conferences, and 2 stated as needed. One parent marked more than one answer.



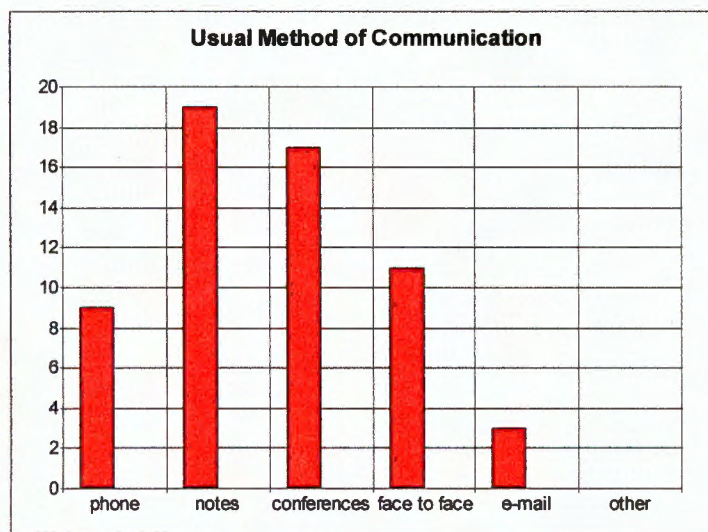
**Figure 2. Difficulty of Contact with Teachers by Parents**



Parents were asked “Rate how difficult it is to contact your child’s teacher.”

Out of 23 responses, 22 stated that it was not difficult to contact their child’s teacher and 1 responded that it was difficult to contact his/her teacher.

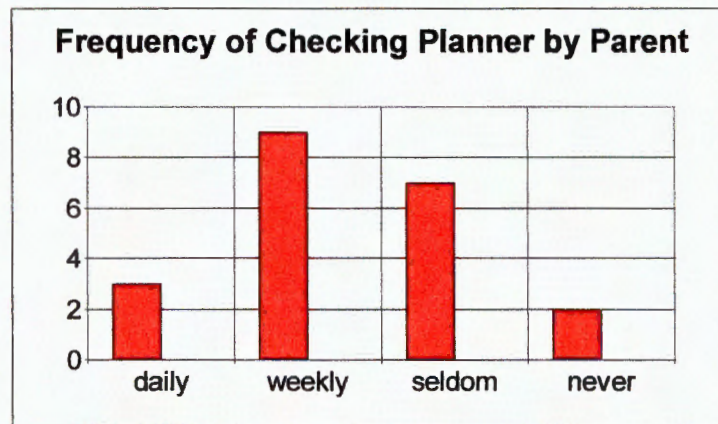
**Figure 3. Usual Method of Communication**



Parents were asked “How do you usually communicate with your child’s teacher?”

Out of 23 responses, 9 usually contact their child’s teachers by phone, 19 by notes, 17 at conferences, 11 face to face, and 3 by e-mail. Parents could check more than one answer.

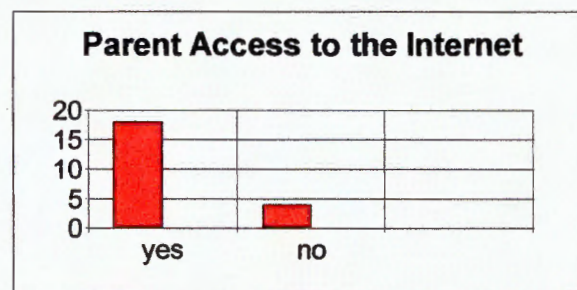
**Figure 4. Frequency of Checking Planner by Parent**



Parents were asked, "How often do you check over your child's planner?"

Out of 21 responses, 3 parents check their child's planner daily, 9 check it weekly, 7 seldom check it, and 2 never check their child's planner.

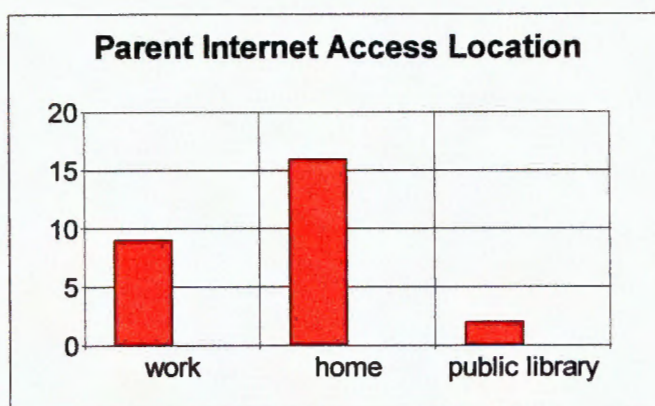
**Figure 5. Internet Access by Parents**



Parents were asked, "Do you have access to the Internet?"

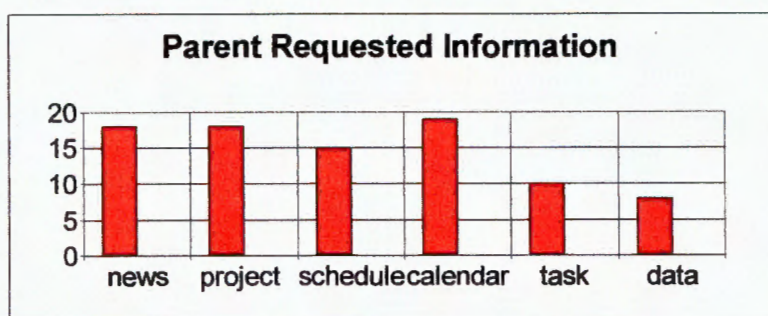
Out of 23 responses, 19 responded that they had access to the Internet while 4 responded that they did not have access.



**Figure 6. Access Locations**

Then parents were asked, "If yes, where is your Internet access?"

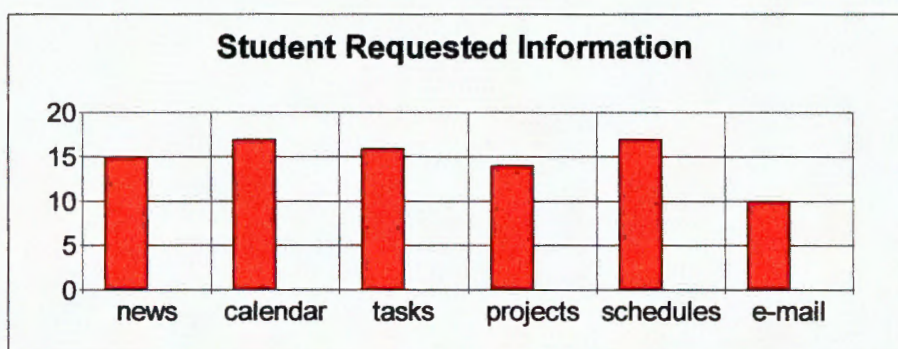
Out of those 19 who have Internet access, 9 have access at work, 16 have access at home, and 2 have access at the public library. Parents could select more than one answer.

**Figure 7. Information Requested by Parents**

Parents were asked, "What types of information would you like to see on our middle school web page?" Parents were told they could check all that apply.

Out of 23 responses, the top six responses given were:

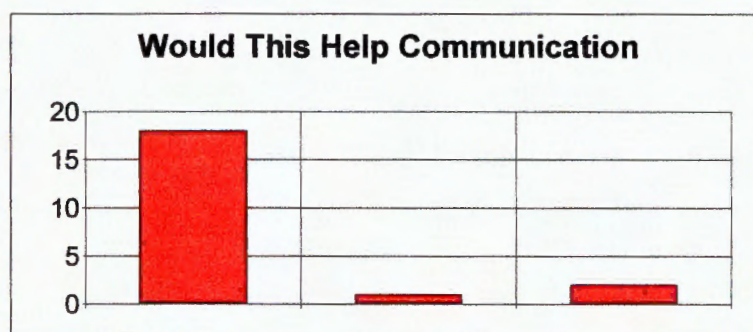
- \* monthly news
- \* project requirements
- \* athletic schedules
- \* school calendar
- \* assignments
- \* teacher data.

**Figure 8. Information Requested by Students**

Students were asked “What types of information would you like to see on a web page for our school ? Students could check all that apply.

Out of 22 students, the top six responses were:

- \* monthly news
- \* school calendar
- \* assignments
- \* project requirements
- \* athletic schedules
- \* e-mail links

**Figure 9. Student Opinion of Web Page Resource**

Students were asked, “ Would a web page help you or your parents communicate with the school ?”

Out of 22 student responses, 18 felt a web page would help communication, 1 stated it would not and 2 did not know.



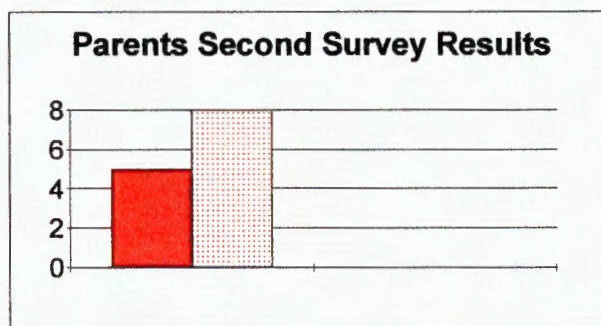
I worked with our local Technology Director, Jeff Trost and other team members, Joyce Haberman and Brian Rupp, in the development of the Nashua-Plainfield Middle School Web page. Using information gathered from the Nashua-Plainfield High School site, responses from the parents and students, as well as information from classes attended, I developed the site using Claris Home Page (Claris Home Page, 1996-1997), and Adobe Photo Deluxe (Adobe Photo Deluxe 1996-1998). The Nashua-Plainfield Middle School web page was incorporated with the web pages of the other two buildings in our district. I included the information requested by parents, and students, as well as other data that would be informative and useful. Sample pages can be viewed at [www.nashua-plainfield.k12.ia.us](http://www.nashua-plainfield.k12.ia.us) or in Appendix F.

### **Second Set of Surveys**

The second survey went out to those same seventh grade parents and students during the third week in December. All 22 of the original students responded, while 13 parent surveys out of 23 were returned. On the second survey the subjects were asked if they had visited the site, reasons why not, number of times visited, topics interested in the most, and suggestions for the site. The results of the information were compiled and put into figures so I could review the information returned to me by parents and students. Although only five parents stated that they had visited the site, those who had viewed it had visited it three to five times. Those links that the parents were most interested in were monthly news, assignments, and athletic schedules. Sixteen students stated that they had visited the site, with athletic schedules, assignments, monthly news being those links that interested them the most. Some of the suggestions were that parents wanted more teachers to post assignments, project requirements, and have more pictures of student activities. Students also wanted more pictures as well as more athletic information to be posted on the web page.

The data included are demonstrated in the figures that follow.

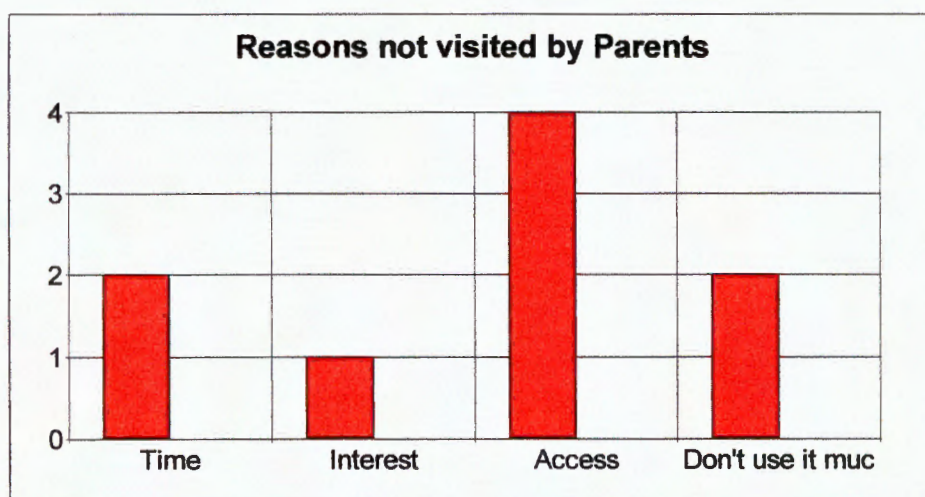
**Figure 10. Second Survey Results on Parent Visits to Site**



Parents were asked, "Prior to receiving this survey, have you visited our middle school web site?"

Out of 13 responses, 8 parents stated that they had not visited the web site, and 5 had visited it.

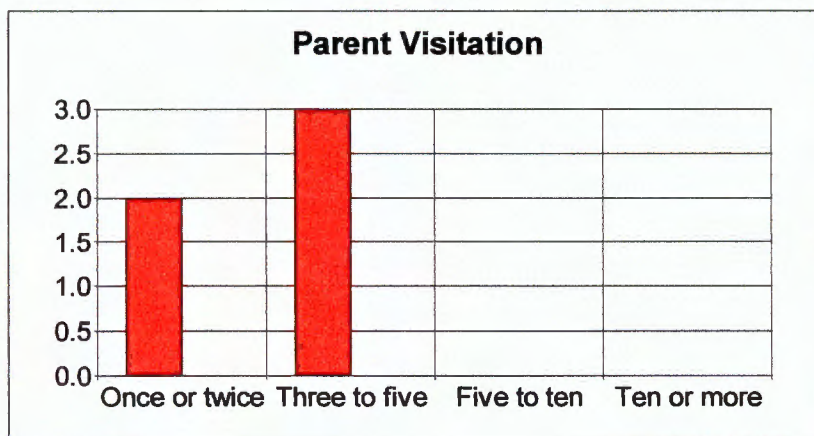
**Figure 11. Reasons Parents Did Not Visit Site**



Parents were asked, "If you answered no, could you tell me why not?"

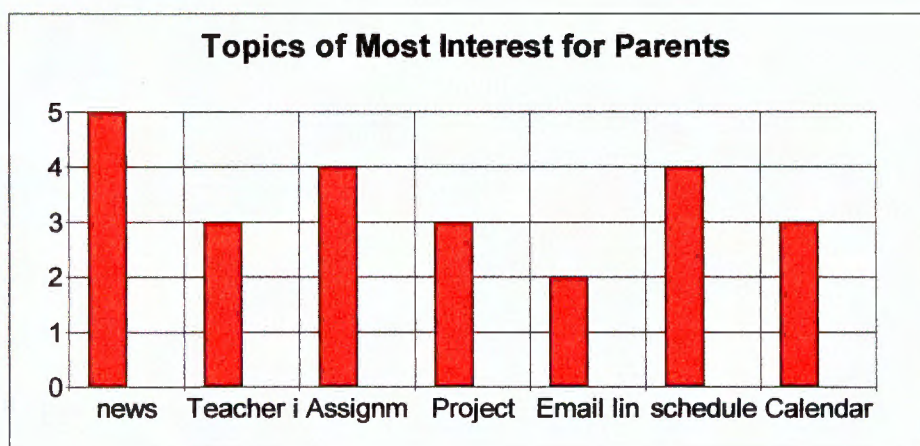
Out of 9 responses, 2 stated time as a factor, 1 stated interest, 4 stated lack of access, and 2 stated that they do not use the computer.



**Figure 12. Number of Parent Visits**

Parents were asked, “If you answered yes, how many times?”

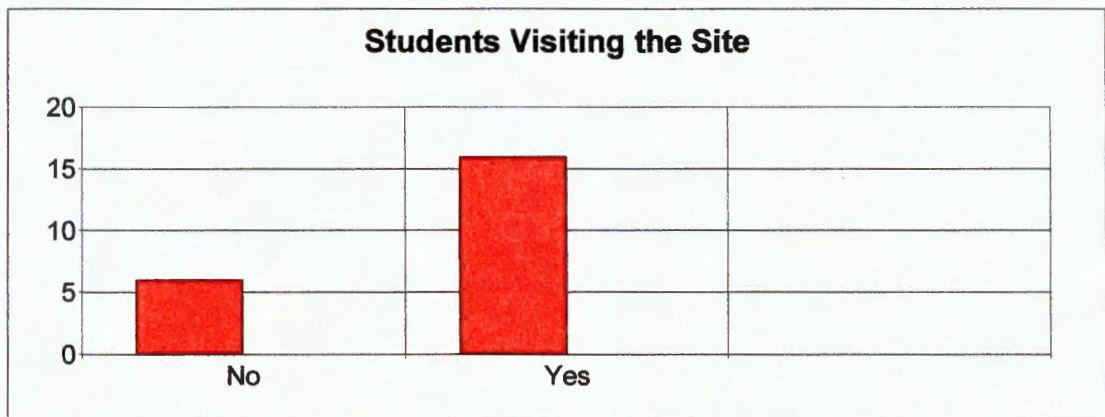
Out of 5 responses, 2 stated once or twice, and 3 stated that they had visited the site three to five times.

**Figure 13. Topics of Most Interest for Parents**

Parents were asked, “What topics interested you the most?” Parents could check all that apply.

Out of 24 responses, 5 stated news, 3 stated teacher information, 4 were interested in assignments, 3 stated project requirements, 2 were interested in the e-mail links, 4 liked the athletic schedules, and 3 were interested in the calendar.

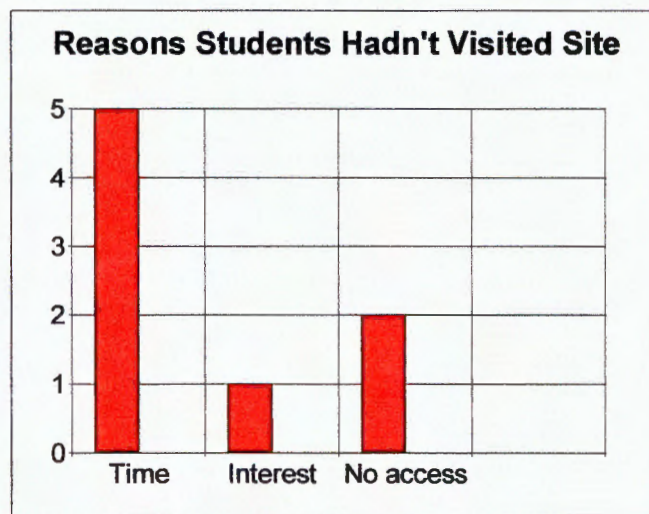
**Figure 14. Second Survey Results on Student Visits to Site**



Students were asked “Prior to receiving this survey, have you visited our middle school web site?”

Out of 22 responses, 6 stated that they had not visited the site and 16 had visited the site.

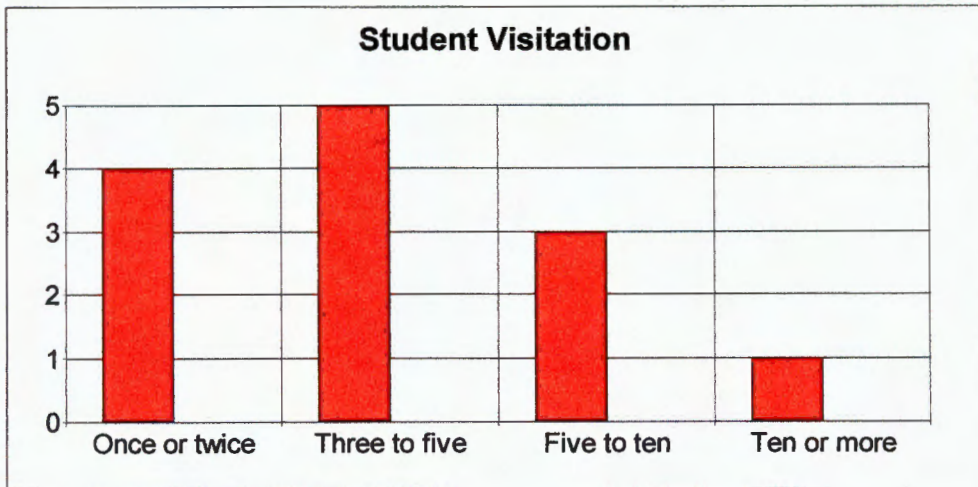
**Figure 15. Reasons Students Did Not Visit Site**



Students were asked, “If you answered no, could you tell me why not?”

Out of 8 responses, 5 stated time, 1 stated interest, and 2 stated that they did not have access to the Internet.

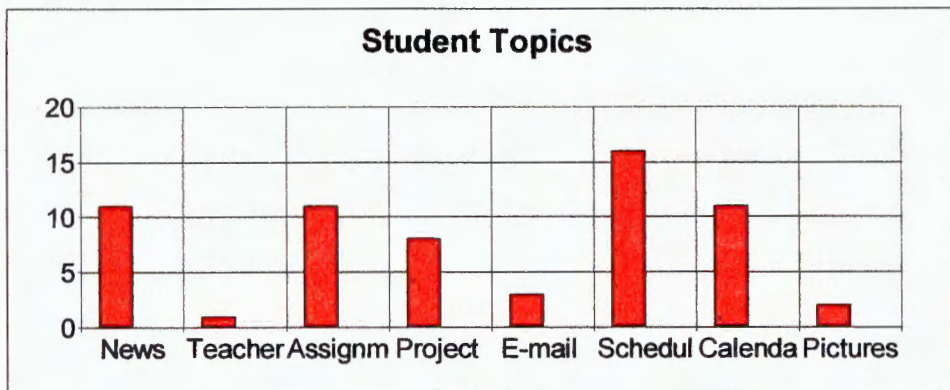
**Figure 16. Number of Student Visits**



Students were asked, “If you answered yes, how many time?”

Out of 13 responses, 4 said once or twice, 5 stated they had visited the site three to five times, while 3 said five to ten times, and 1 said he/she had visited the site ten or more times.

**Figure 17. Topics of Most Interest to Students**



Students were asked, “When viewing the site, what topics interested you the most?” Students could check all that applied.

Out of 63 responses, 11 were interested in the news, 1 in teacher information, 11 in assignments, 8 in project requirements, 3 in e-mail links, 16 were interested in athletic schedules, 11 liked the calendar, and 2 stated that the pictures interested them.



### Third Set of Surveys

A third set of surveys were sent out in late January, 2002 to the same parents and students in the seventh grade. The original 22 students and 7 of the original 23 parents returned the survey. Much of the information received was identical to those results given in the second survey. The same links were listed as the most interesting and few additional recommendations were given by either parents and or students. The student recommendations included more information on basketball games and the posting of class groupings for the new quarter. One parent suggested that the school help provide Internet access to those families that can not afford the service.

One of the concerns and limitations for this study that I encountered were that I did not receive back the same number of second and third set of surveys as the first ones sent out. I realize that the second set was sent out during the holiday season which tends to be a busy time for families. Also there were problems dealing with some of the photos and graphics. They would not appear as planned or were not placed as intended. In talking with Jeff Trost, the Technology Coordinator, he suggested redoing some of the graphics, to not get frustrated and that sometimes it just does not happen right away (personal communication, December, 18, 2001). The larger the amount of graphic information that is put on a site, the slower the loading of the site. A third problem was working with some of the links. They would seem to work for one machine but not on another. Jeff Trost stated that some machines simply work faster and are able to work with more data.

One of the selections that was available to students and parents was the e-mail link. Although personally I have not received any e-mail, other teachers in the district have. This is another option that people have in communicating with the school. Although as of yet, not many parents have used this opportunity, my hope is that they will in the future.

To receive some feedback from the community I visited with community leaders, at the Lion's Club annual March meeting. Members were supportive of the development



and implementation of a web page. Comments from community members include the following:

“Now I am going to have to buy a computer.”

“It’s a good way to find out things in a hurry.”

“A very easy, convenient location.”

“It’s nice to be able to see my grand-kids activities and see what they are working on.”

“Are there any other schools in the area that are doing such a project?”

Another result of this study is the commitment of rest of the Nashua-Plainfield Middle School to continue to improve and build the site. It was suggested at an inservice, that other teachers be trained in the building of pages and links to continue adding on to the site. The current principal suggested that teachers submit a proposal that Phase III money and other inservice time be used for this purpose. As the parents have suggested, more teachers are putting their assignments, project requirements, pictures, and honors on the Nashua-Plainfield Middle School Web Page for parents, students, and community members to view.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions/Recommendations**

#### **Conclusions**

There were many people impacted with the building of the Nashua-Plainfield Middle School web page. Students, parents, teachers, as well as, community members have benefited from its implementation.

##### **Students**

Many students have used the web page to find out information such as assignments, project requirements, calendar events, and athletic practice schedules. They have also use the Search Engine link to help find other information needed for research and class work. Students have said that they enjoyed seeing themselves on the web page and have shared those pictures with others at home and relatives who do not live in this area. They are constantly asking when new photos are going to be added and what will be on the site.

##### **Parents**

The feedback from the parents has been positive as well. They like the idea of having assignments posted so they can check what their child is working on and when it will be due. They have also stated that they would like more teachers to post that information. Another feature that has been viewed was the monthly calendar and athletic schedule. The addition of these areas makes it convenient for them to see when activities are and what time.

##### **Teachers**

There needs to be a substantial commitment on the teachers' part in order for a teacher-controlled web page to succeed. Teachers have little extra time and energy. Although this is the case, daily or weekly updating is the biggest key to increasing the number of times parent, students, and other community member may visit the site. If the information is kept current, it means more to others. It can become a daily ritual to

update. People can check out what is going on at their local school and get current information. It is my goal that students will make it part of their day as well.

I understand that not all teachers want to take on that extra responsibility of updating and maintaining a web page. Along with the other changes in educational areas and the need to be flexible, it does take time. My hope is that as teachers build web pages, they will find them to be beneficial for all concerned. As our students grow in the use of technology, we need to keep up as well. Education cannot afford to lag behind in this growing revolution.

### **Community**

The community response has also been positive. Those who have visited or heard about the web page, liked the possibility of logging in and seeing what is going on with their local school. With a small rural school district, many people are related or know students and would like the opportunity to see how and what students are doing. This addition allows them to keep up with current events, special activities, and honors. Some of the members would like to know what other schools have this capability so they can view other students such as grandchildren in their school work and activities.

To help raise student achievement, community, home, and school need to work together. Although the use of computer technology for communication is still being researched, the effects of this type of interaction are notable. In today's busy society, one way in which to help build two-way communication includes the use of a web page. With the number of different companies that are making it easier for teachers to set up a personalized web site, the potential for favorable interaction increases.

### **Recommendations**

There are some particulars that I would recommend for the builder of a web page. With the amount of time that is involved in the building of a website, some technical knowledge and information that should be gathered before the actual building of the page occurs. This will facilitate the building of the web page.

## **Builder**

First of all, the website builder needs to choose a program for the construction of the site. The evaluation of programs to use and the ease of which these programs run can be a difficult one. If the person building the page has a great deal of technology experience or a person has limited experience there are choices available.

Another consideration is the posting of material. Some programs only allow infrequent renovations to a site where as others allow the changing of material to be as needed. In my opinion, for an educational setting, the more often that the builder can update the information the better it is. Schedules, assignments, and activities change frequently. If the information on a web page is consistently inaccurate, then people will not use the site. The viewers need to know that the material will be updated regularly so they have the confidence to depend on it.

Before the material is put on to the computer, a rough draft should be put on paper so the website builder has an idea as to how the pages will look. When doing this changes can be made much easier at this time than later. Also at this time, if graphics are to be added, a folder on the computer should be made and copies of graphics in a format that the computer will identify should be built. There are different places on the Internet that will allow you to download graphics; some are free, while others require a fee. Once again, the more graphics a web page has, the slower the page will show up.

A person needs to take the time to become familiar with the program and to not get frustrated. There will be times that things do not work out as they had planned them. Keep trying to input the material, ask questions and above all do not be afraid to ask for help.

After the data has been put onto the site, frequent viewing in the browser is recommended. Sometimes in the building site, things look the way it was intended, but in the browser form it does not have the intended format. Then the builder needs to make the necessary changes. This may include the changing of figures, graphic, or photos. Fonts can

also be changed. Another consideration is the use of color. Different machines read color in different ways. There are charts that can be used for specific color codes for certain programs.

If there is a password or site number that allows the website builder to access the server that houses the web site, that needs to be considered personal and private.

Sometimes students or other people think that it is funny to go in and hack the program and make changes that are inappropriate. Make sure that this information is confidential.

Computer use does not take the place of personal interaction. In some cases, there are problems with on-line communication in which some students may substitute this type of communication for face-to-face interaction. Because of this, Bob Matsuola (Healey, 1998) of the Dalton School in New York City recommends four general principles to keep the "virtual school" from demolishing the aims of the human one. They include the following areas:

1. Identify: Link the user to the community. Users retain their own names, thus everyone is personally accountable to the community for his or her own actions.
2. Relevancy: local content. Eighty percent of the content and communications takes place face-to-face between people with in the same physical work space with 20 percent on-line.
3. Proximity: Matching the virtual with the real. On-line contact needs to be reinforced with face-to-face contact. Virtual communication does not replace face-to-face interaction.
4. Accessibility: The system is easily usable. The network is set up so people can get on-line easily and workstations are readily available. (Healey, 1998, p. 254)

### **Parents, Students and Community**

My recommendation for parents, students, and community members is to realize that schools want to improve communication. There are many factors involved with miscommunication. One way to help with this concern is to work with the schools and

each other so we can all help in giving our students the best opportunity so they can succeed. The use of a web page is one way in which we can communicate with each other. This two-way process can be used to answer questions, get information and showcase positive things that are going on with students and classrooms. With the regular update of material as well as other options for viewers, we can build on that partnership.

Technology itself is not the only factor that will increase parent and community involvement. Parent-child relationships are different from teacher-child relationships (Becher, 1994). By increasing the communication parents develop a more positive attitude about school, its personnel, and help gather support in the community (Becher, 1994).

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## **Appendixes**

1. Appendix A: Letter of Consent
2. Appendix B: Parent Survey # 1
3. Appendix C: Student Survey # 1
3. Appendix D: Parent Follow-up Survey
4. Appendix E: Student Follow-up Survey
5. Appendix F: Sample pages from Nashua-Plainfield Middle School Webpage

## **Appendix A**

### **Letter of Consent**

December 15, 2001

Dear Parents of the 7th Grade Students,

I am completing an Action Research Project as part of a requirement to obtain a Master of Arts in Education from the University of Northern Iowa. This project will focus on communication. I am interested in parent involvement in our school, communication between parents and teachers, and the use of teacher-created web pages. I will be sending out surveys once a month to parents and students to gather opinions about these three areas. Your participation, as well as your child's part in this project is voluntary and no foreseeable risks or discomfort for you or your child is anticipated.

You may contact my graduate advisor, Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas, 319-273-5800 for further information or questions or you may phone me at 641-435-4927.

Thank you for your time and cooperation,

Lori Lee

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project and acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement.

\_\_\_\_\_ I hereby agree to allow my child to participate in this project by completing and returning the surveys.

\_\_\_\_\_ I hereby agree to participation in this project by completing and returning the surveys.

---

Signature of parent or responsible agent

---

Date

---

Printed name of parent

---

Signature of Investigator-Lori Lee

## **Appendix B**

### **Parent Survey #1**

December 15, 2001

Dear Parent,

I am interested in knowing how well family and school communication is conducted at our school. Please take a few minutes to fill out the following survey. Return by November 1 or as soon as you can. Thank-you for your time.

**Lori Lee**

- 1) How often do you communicate with your child's teacher(s)?

       daily                                             weekly  
       couple of times a month                 several times a year  
       only at parent teacher conferences             never

- 2) Please rate how difficult it is to contact your child's teacher(s).

\_\_\_\_\_ impossible                      \_\_\_\_\_ difficult  
\_\_\_\_\_ sometimes difficult            \_\_\_\_\_ not difficult

- 3) How do you usually communicate with your child's teacher(s)? (check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_ notes, progress reports, planner  
 \_\_\_\_\_ conferences/meetings \_\_\_\_\_ personal contact  
 \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_ other

- 4) How often do you check over your child's planner?

\_\_\_\_\_ daily  
\_\_\_\_\_ seldom

\_\_\_\_\_ couple of times a week  
\_\_\_\_\_ never

- 5) Do you have access to the Internet?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

- 6) If yes, where is your Internet access?

\_\_\_\_\_ work \_\_\_\_\_ home \_\_\_\_\_ public library  
 \_\_\_\_\_ other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

- 7) What types of information would you like to see on our middle school web page (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> monthly news	<input type="checkbox"/> project requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> athletic schedules
<input type="checkbox"/> teacher information	<input type="checkbox"/> email links	<input type="checkbox"/> school calendar
<input type="checkbox"/> assignments		
<input type="checkbox"/> other (please explain)		

Signature of person completing survey

Date completed

## **Appendix C**

### **Student Survey #1**

December 15, 2001

Dear 7th Grade Students,

I am in the process of learning more about how well we communicate with students and parents at our middle school. Please take a few minutes to fill out the following survey.

Return it to me when you are finished. Thank you for your time.

Mrs. Lee

1) Do you have access to the Internet outside of school?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

2) If you answered yes to # 1, where is your Internet access?

\_\_\_\_\_ home

\_\_\_\_\_ public library

\_\_\_\_\_ other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

3) What types of information would you like to see on a web page for our school ?(Check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ monthly news      \_\_\_\_\_ project requirements      \_\_\_\_\_ athletic schedules

\_\_\_\_\_ teacher information      \_\_\_\_\_ email links      \_\_\_\_\_ calendar

\_\_\_\_\_ assignments      \_\_\_\_\_ other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

4) Would a web page help you and your parents communicate with the school?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

5) How could a web page help you or your parents understand what is going on at school?

\_\_\_\_\_

6) How could a web page help you or your parents communicate back to school?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person completing survey

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date completed

## **Appendix D**

### **Parent Follow-up Survey**



January 8, 2002

Dear Parents ,

This is a follow up questionnaire for my communication project that I have been working on these past few weeks. I would appreciate it if you would fill out the following questions about communication between home and school. Thank you for your time.

Lori Lee

1) Prior to receiving this survey, have you visited our middle school web site?

\_\_\_\_\_ No, please continue to question 2

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, please continue to question 3

2) If you answered no, could you tell me why not? (You may then go to question 6)

\_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_ interest \_\_\_\_\_ no access \_\_\_\_\_ other ( please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

3) If you answered yes, how many times?

\_\_\_\_\_ once or twice \_\_\_\_\_ three to five \_\_\_\_\_ five to ten \_\_\_\_\_ ten or more

4) When viewing the site, what topics interested you the most? Please check all that apply

\_\_\_\_\_ monthly news \_\_\_\_\_ project requirements \_\_\_\_\_ athletic schedules

\_\_\_\_\_ teacher information \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail links \_\_\_\_\_ calendar

\_\_\_\_\_ assignments \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

5) Is there any additional information that you would find useful on the site? Be specific

\_\_\_\_\_

6) Is there anything else you can suggest that would improve communication between home and school? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

After completing this survey, if you would like to visit the web site, please go to :

[www. nashua-plainfield.k12.ia.us](http://www.nashua-plainfield.k12.ia.us) and go to the middle school page.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person completing survey

Date completed

## **Appendix E**

### **Student Follow-up Survey**

January 8, 2002

Dear 7th Grade Students,

This is a follow up questionnaire for my communication project that I have been working on these past few weeks. I would appreciate it if you would fill out the following questions about communication between home and school.

Thank you for your time and cooperation. Mrs. Lee

1) Prior to receiving this survey, have you visited our middle school web site?

\_\_\_\_\_ no, please continue to question 2 \_\_\_\_\_ yes, please continue to question 3

2) If you answered no, could you tell me why not? (You may then go to question 6)

\_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_ interest \_\_\_\_\_ no access \_\_\_\_\_ other ( please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

3) If you answered yes, how many times?

\_\_\_\_\_ once or twice \_\_\_\_\_ three to five \_\_\_\_\_ five to ten \_\_\_\_\_ ten or more

4) When viewing the site, what topics interested you the most? Please check all that apply

\_\_\_\_\_ monthly news \_\_\_\_\_ project requirements \_\_\_\_\_ athletic schedules

\_\_\_\_\_ teacher information \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail links \_\_\_\_\_ calendar

\_\_\_\_\_ assignments \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

5) Is there any additional information that you would find useful on the site?

\_\_\_\_\_

6) Is there anything else you can suggest that would improve communication between

home and school? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

After completing this survey, if you would like to visit the web site, please go to :

[www. nashua-plainfield.k12.nh.us](http://www.nashua-plainfield.k12.nh.us) and go to the middle school page.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person completing survey


Date completed

**Appendix F**

**Samples Pages from the**

**Nashua-Plainfield**

**Middle School Web Site**

	<b>Nashua-Plainfield Middle School</b>
	417 Main St. Plainfield Iowa 50666 319-276-4451
	Principal, Ron Reusche

"Educating to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world"

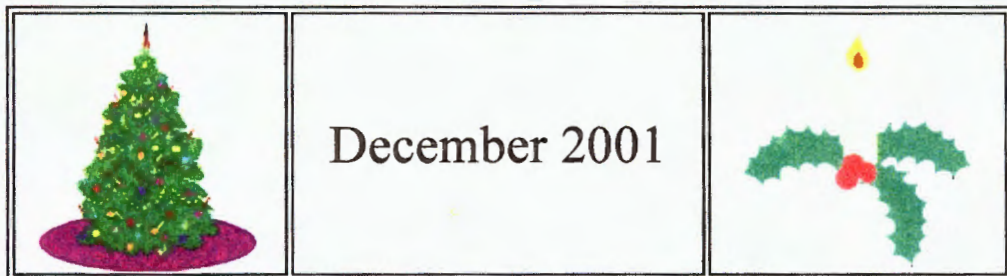
<a href="#"><u>Academics</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Administration</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Athletics</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Calendar</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Excel</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Faculty/Staff</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Honor Roll/ Awards</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Special Events</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Students</u></a>

<a href="#"><u>N-P Search Engine</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>N-P Main Page</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Live Weather Net</u></a>
--	--------------------------------------	---



Home Of The  
Huskies





Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1st NEIBA Honor Band
2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th 7th B BB @ Charles City	7th M.S. Wrestling @ New Hampton M.S. B BB @ Greene M.S. G BB vs Greene Home	8th
9th	10th M.S. Concert 7:00	11th M.S. Wr @ Dike-New Hartford M.S. G BB vs Janesville Home	12th	13th Progress reports go out	14th Return Progress reports M.S. G BB @ Riceville	15th
16th	17th M.S. Wr @ Riceville	18th 7th G BB vs. North Fayette Home 7th B BB @ Osage	19th	20th 8th G BB @ North Fayette 8th B BB vs Osage Home	21st <b>EARLY DISMISSAL</b>	22nd
23rd	24th Winter	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th
30th		Winter		Vacation		
<a href="#">Return to Main Page</a>				<b>Subject to Change</b>		



# Welcome



The Nashua-Plainfield Middle School is continuing to make positive changes that will give your child the best education possible. Recognizing the unique differences and needs of the middle school students, Nashua-Plainfield Middle School will continue to incorporate team teaching. Teaming allows teachers to share information about students, address behavior and academic problems, provide information to parents, and plan ways to show how various subjects are related through interdisciplinary teaching.



<a href="#">Math</a>	<a href="#">Science</a>	<a href="#">Social Studies</a>
<a href="#">Language Arts</a>		<a href="#">Exploratory</a>

## Academic Support

<a href="#">Resource/SCI</a>	<a href="#">Guidance</a>	<a href="#">Media</a>	<a href="#">TAG</a>
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# Seventh Grade Science

## Units

Three Parts to Health- Mental, Social and Physical

Measurement- Metric system

Scientific Method

Structure-Muscles, Bones, Skin

Food and Digestion

Circulation

Respiration and Excretion

Fighting Disease

The Nervous System

Endocrine System

## Projects

Seed Experiment/ Egg container

Model of Joint System

Experiments With Nutrition

Model of the Heart

Poster of Dangers of Smoking

Debate on Helmets

Project on Care and Nutrition

## [Assignments](#)

## [Pictures](#)

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## 7th Science Assignments and Projects



### For December 10-14

Monday-Vocabulary due, Worksheet due

Tuesday-Read pages 140-144 in class and discuss, questions at the end of the section

Wednesday-Correct questions, Discuss diseases of the Lungs, Study for vocab quiz

Thursday-Vocabulary Quiz, worksheet, begin ads on anti-smoking

Friday-video, work on ads

Advertising Due Monday Dec. 17th

# 7th Grade Exploratories

## Second Semester



Art	Music	<a href="#">Family Living</a>
Reading	Computer	P. E.

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## 7th Family Living



Family Living is an Exploratory class that meets on a six day rotation during the semester. During the third quarter, students will review laundry techniques, and sewing. They will manufacture a pillow project. The students spend time reviewing Foods and Nutrition during the fourth quarter. They have time in cooking labs to give them hands-on experience.

### Pictures

#### First day of the cycle:

Discussion on fashion, small hand tools

#### Second day of the cycle:

Vocabulary for machine gone over, machine practice, Study for test

Test over laundry notes starting with the cycle beginning  
Feb. 8th

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# Special Events for Middle School

## 7TH GRADE WINTER OLYMPICS

	
1ST PLACE SCOOTER LUGE	2ND PLACE SCOOTER LUGE
	3RD PLACE SCOOTER LUGE

### PUDDING EATING CONTEST

		
1ST PLACE	2ND PLACE	3RD PLACE
	WHAT FUN!!!	



## Nashua-Plainfield Community Schools

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Superintendent, Dr. Linda Johanningmeier  
Main Office  
612 Greeley Street Nashua, Iowa 50658 USA (641)435-4835

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"Educating to meet  
the challenges  
of an  
ever-changing world."



Home of the Huskies

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<a href="#"><u>Nashua- Plainfield High School</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Nashua- Plainfield Middle School</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Nashua Elementary</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Plainfield Elementary</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Our Communities</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Staff Directory</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>General Information</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Calendar of Events</u></a>

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Middle School](#)